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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, May 2, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEW TEA STANDARDS GO INTO EFFECT." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture.

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"Yesterday went into effect new tea standards fixed in February by Uncle Sam's seven tea-tasters, who met in New York early in February, using magnifying glasses to test purity of 200 tea samples.

"New standards will influence hot tea and iced tea of estimated 50 million tea-drinkers and 19 billion cups tea expected to be drunk during year beginning May 1."

Homemakers -- don't blame me for the words you've just heard. I hope I don't talk like the latest edition of a certain popular magazine. No indeed! I prefer the free and easy tone -- and I like to stop for comments whenever I please. But our Washington correspondent with the Federal Food and Drug Administration, which enforces the National Tea Act . . . . Well, let's be charitable. I suppose she likes that style of writing -- or she wouldn't use it, when she sends her weekly report.

Now let's go back to those seven tea-tasters, on the United States Board of Tea Examiners. Our reporter says they used magnifying glasses, to test the purity of 200 samples of tea. And here's something interesting -- our correspondent has sent us an account of the Board meeting, from the "Pathfinder." Here's what the Pathfinder says:

"The Board members resembled studious laboratory scientists; but using their sensory perceptions to test the quality (of the tea), they acted like witch doctors on a rampage. They sniffed and slurped various prepared potions, and then rubbed wet and dry leaves between their fingers. In addition, they astounded the uninitiated lay observers by demanding such working conditions as these:

"(1) A clear northern light to distinguish minute variations in the tea leaf, and in the color of the liquid.

"(2) Tea cups without handles, to avoid shadows on the liquid under experiment.

"Despite the seeming peculiarity of this procedure, the Board -- created by Congress under the Tea Act of 1897 -- has reversed a trend. Before its inception foreign nations dumped thousands of pounds of bad tea, containing such harmful elements as talc, gypsum, and Prussian blue on the American market.



"However, years of vigilance on the part of the National Tea Board have boosted the standards so high that importers are by now well aware of Uncle Sam's strict requirements. Of the more than 91 and a half million pounds of tea examined last year, only 83 thousand pounds were rejected."

And that's the story, from the Pathfinder magazine. . . . No, here's one more quotation -- a "Significant Fact." (We certainly can't pass up a "Significant Fact.") "The United States is rapidly becoming a tea-drinking nation. In 1937, Americans consumed more than 95 and a half million pounds of tea -- an increase of more than 14 million pounds over 1936."

And here's a legal looking document -- a copy of the new "Standards Under the Tea Act," effective May 1, 1938, or yesterday. Since our correspondent isn't here to check up on us, I don't think I'll read all this information. Just a few extracts, like this one: "These standards apply to tea shipped from abroad on or after May 1, 1938 . . . " And here's something about an Amendment, which says that from now on in the case of Ceylon, India, Java, Sumatra, and Formosa Oolong teas, the needle leaf, and the Pekoe tips, shall be separated." They're to be separated by passing them through a "Number 26 sieve, of Number 30 brass wire, after the tea has been sifted through a Number 16 sieve."

I see this notice is signed by the Secretary of Agriculture. Perhaps I should have read it all . . . .

Well, that seems to be about all -- except the names of the seven men on the Tea Board. Here they are --

"San Francisco is represented by Edward Bransten; Chicago, Walter Hellyer; Philadelphia, A. P. Irwin; Boston, Robert A. Lewis; New York City, J. H. Swenarton; Brooklyn, George F. Mitchell; and -- New York City again -- Charles F. Hutchinson, Chief Tea Examiner.

"The Board is charged with the duty of preparing and submitting to the Secretary of Agriculture standard samples of tea with which all teas entering the United States are compared as to purity, quality, and fitness for consumption under the Tea Inspection Act of 1897, as amended. The Board has been selected to represent responsible elements of the tea trade handling the various types of tea imported in the more important centers of trade.

"Secretary of Agriculture Wallace stated in December, when the Board was reappointed:

"While it is desirable that occasional changes be made in the Board, giving it from time to time wider representation, and two changes have been made in the last three years, it is desirable that a majority of its members shall have gained broad experience in the selection of these important tea standards, and that there shall be a degree of stability in the Board. In consequence, no changes have been made this year."

And that's all of today's report from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, which enforces the National Tea Act. . . A very good report -- very educational -- but I wish our correspondent had included a recipe -- the Tea Board's recipe, for making hot tea, and iced tea.

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